

A background image featuring a rainbow flag with a blue ribbon tied in a loop on the right side. The ribbon is a solid blue color, contrasting with the multi-colored stripes of the flag.

# The Consequences of Erectile Dysfunction and other Sexual Changes after prostate cancer:

## A comparison of Gay, Bisexual and Heterosexual Men

*Jane Ussher & Janette Perz*

*Western Sydney University*

*Translational Health Research Institute*



**Are gay/bisexual men's  
experiences of prostate cancer  
different from that of heterosexual  
men?**

# **Sexual Wellbeing and Quality of Life after Prostate Cancer for Gay and Bisexual Men and their Partners**

*Cls: Jane Ussher, Janette Perz, Suzanne Chambers, David Latini*

*Als: Gary Dowsett, Ian Davis, Scott Williams, Ian Brotherton*

*Research Officers: Duncan Rose, Andrew Kellett*

*Collaboration: University of Western Sydney, ANZUP, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Baylor College, ACON*

*Funding Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia (PCFA)*

# Comparison of Gay/Bisexual Men and Heterosexual and with PCa

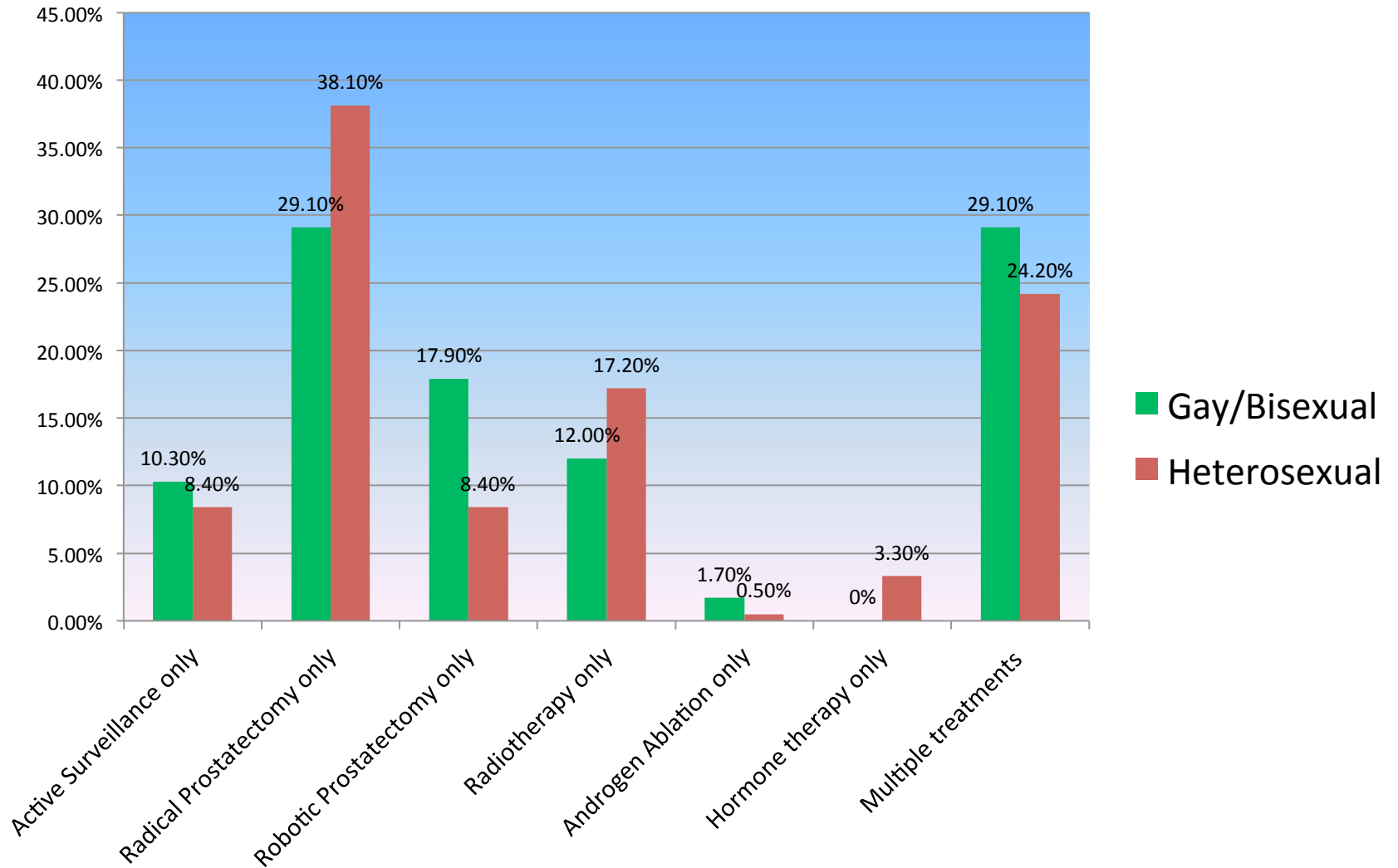
## Gay/Bisexual Men (81% Gay, 19% bi)

- N= 124 (survey)
  - N=46 (interview)
- Average Age = 64
- Time since diagnosis = 5.9yr
- Currently partnered = 77%

## Heterosexual men

- N= 225 (survey)
  - N= 44 (interview)
- Average Age = 71
- Time since diagnosis = 7.7yr
- Currently partnered = 86%

# Treatment Type



# **Difference in relationship context:**

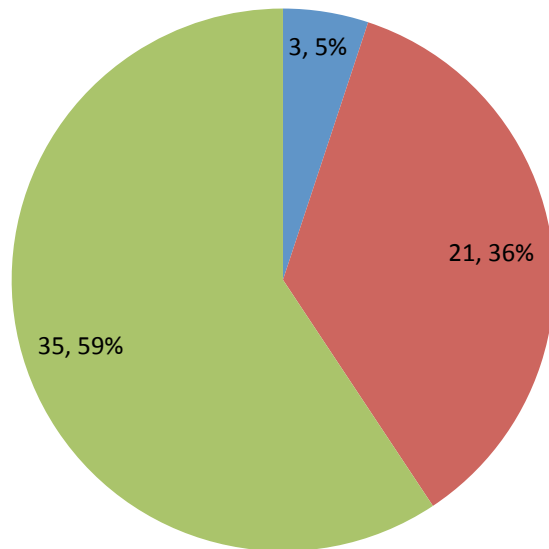
**Context of sexual engagement  
implications for caring and support**



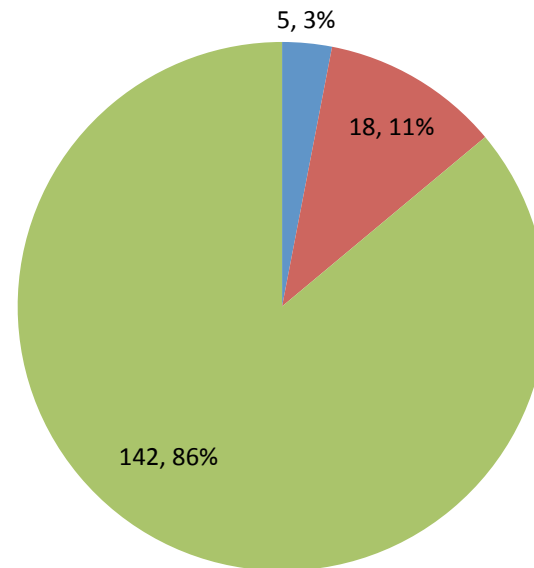
# Length of Current Relationship

GB men newer relationships

Gay/Bisexual



Heterosexual



■ Less than 6 months

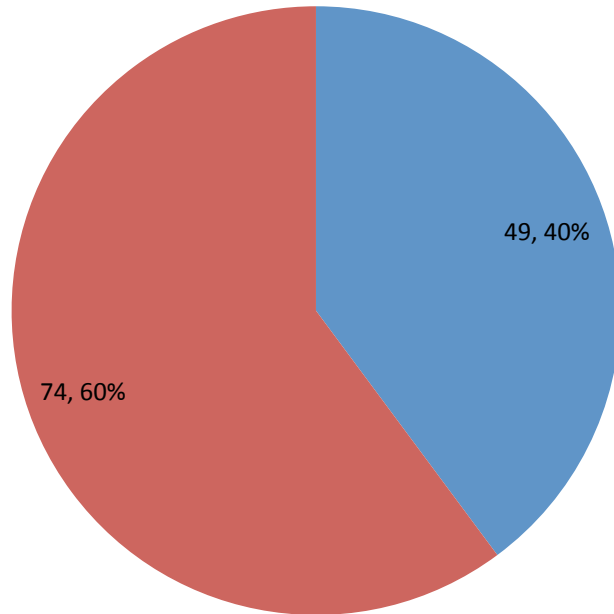
■ 6 months-10years

■ More than 10 years

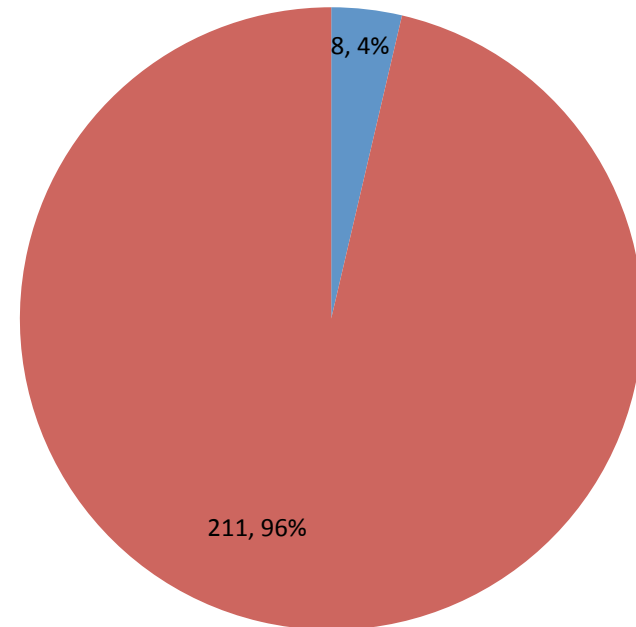
# Casual Sex

GB men more casual partners currently

Gay/Bisexual



Heterosexual



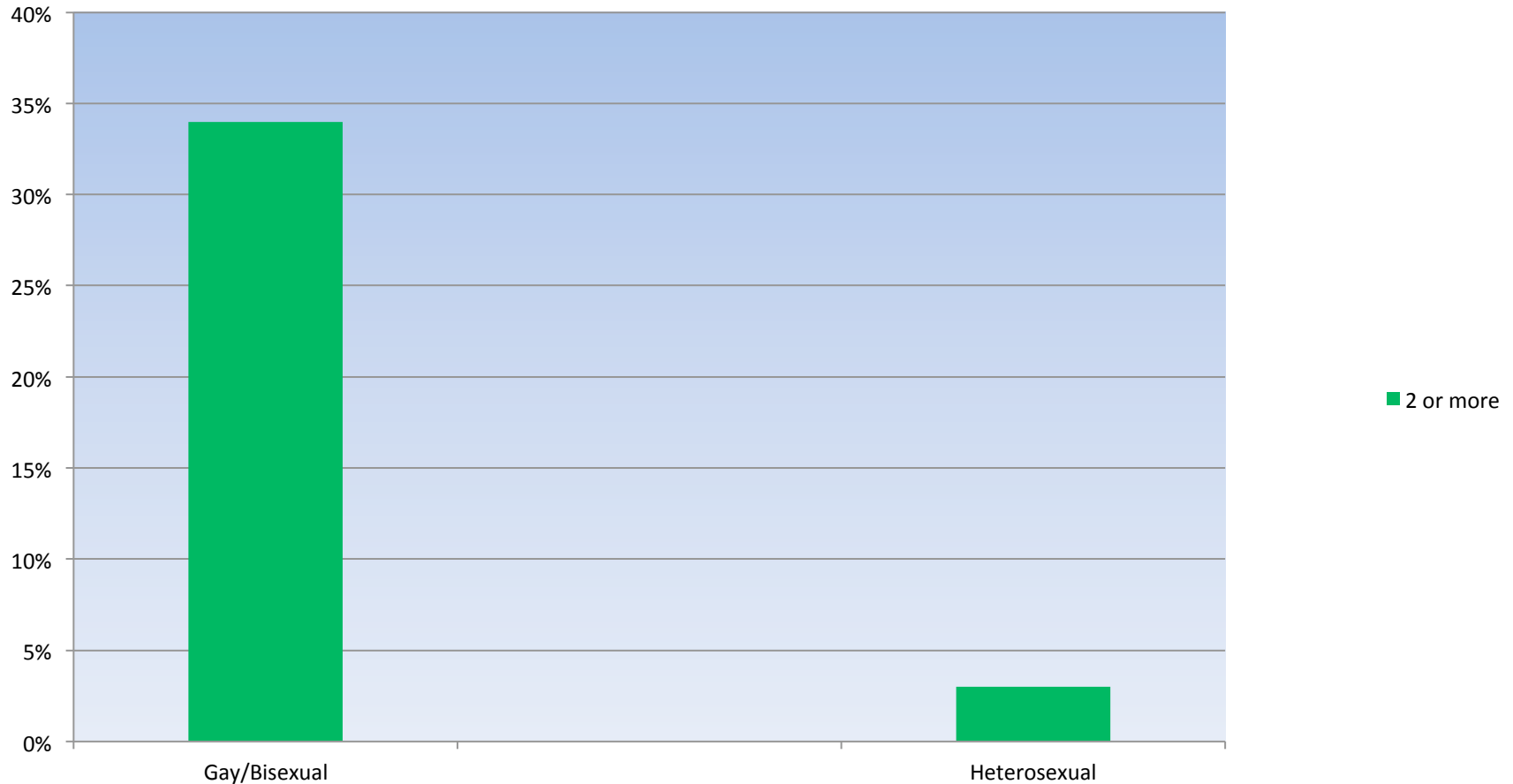
■ Yes  
■ No



# Number of Sexual Partners

(“How many different partners have you had sex with in the last 6 months?”)

2 or more



# Differences in sexual functioning, psychological wellbeing and health related QOL

Ussher, JM, Perz, J., Kellett, A., Chambers, S. Latini, S., Davis, S., Rose, D., Dowsett, G., Williams, S. (2016) Health Related Quality of Life, Psychological Distress and Sexual Changes following Prostate Cancer: A comparison of Gay and Bisexual men with Heterosexual men. *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 13, 425-434 doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2015.12.026

# Sexual Functioning & Sexual Domain of HRQOL

**GM men significantly higher sexual functioning – before and after cancer**

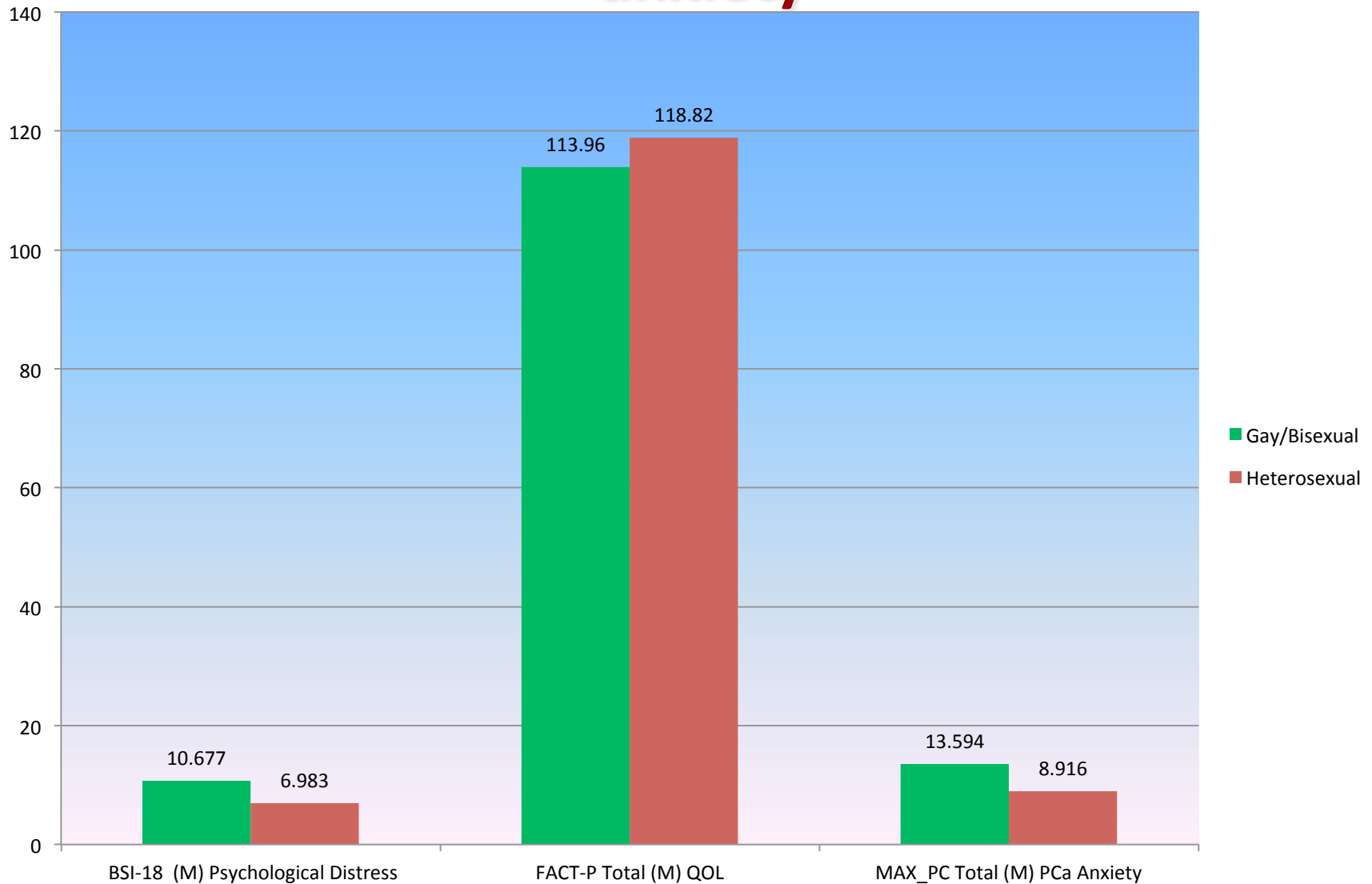


# PCa-related QOL

**GB men lower masculine self-esteem, higher sexual confidence**

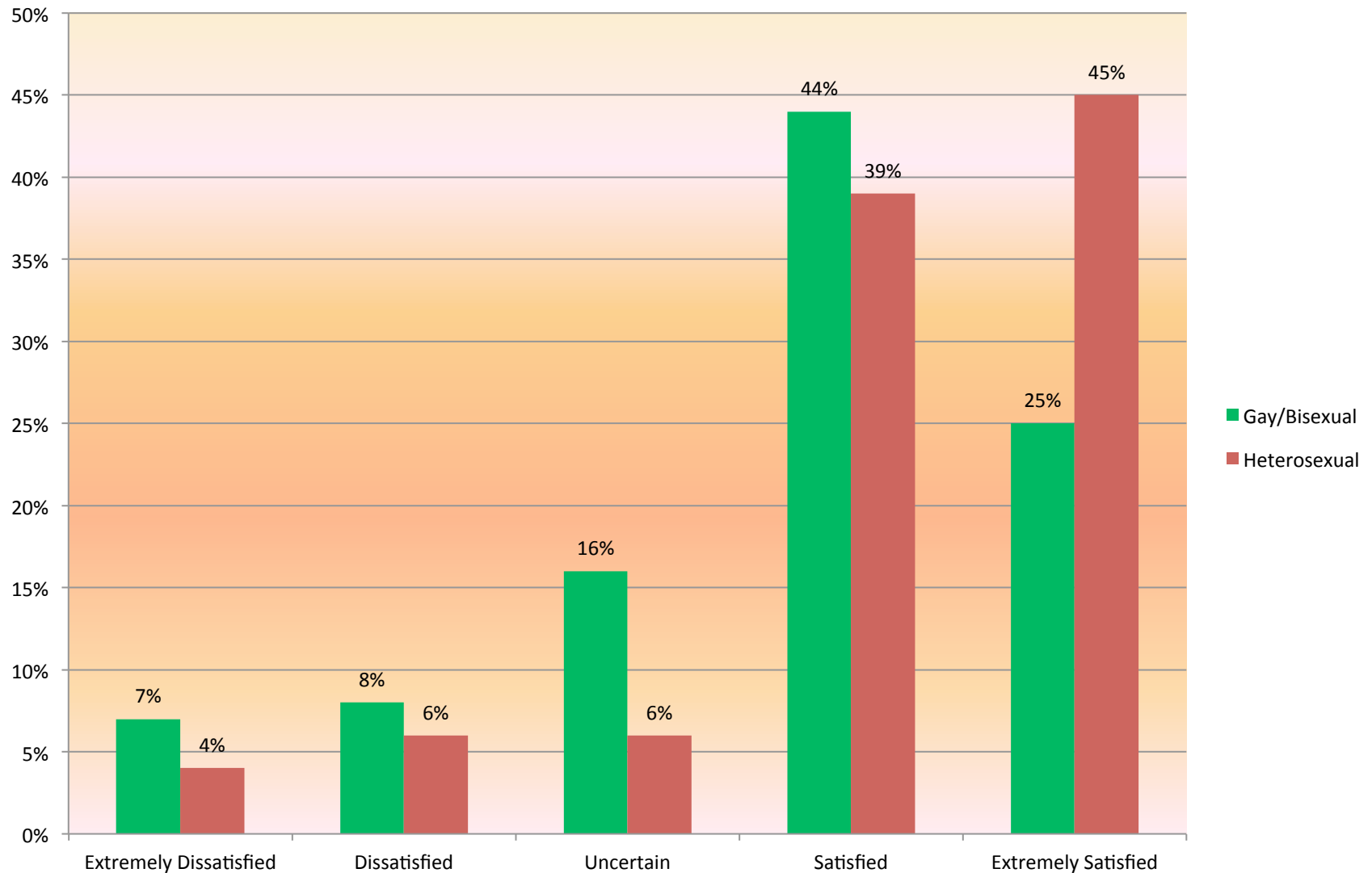


# GB men significantly higher psychological distress, lower health related QOL, higher PCa anxiety



# Satisfaction with Treatment

## GB men significantly less satisfied



# Gay Men' s experiences:

## Prostate cancer threatens sexual disqualification

Ussher, JM, Perz, J., Rose, D. Dowsett, G.D., Chambers, S., Williams, S. Davis, S. Latini, D. (2017) Threat of Sexual Disqualification: The Consequences of Erectile Dysfunction and other Sexual Changes for Gay and Bisexual Men with Prostate Cancer *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 46(7) 2043-2057. doi: 10.1007/s10508-016-0728-0



# Threat to Gay Identity

*I'm still a gay man but what that meant was, was suddenly quite different. Somehow being sexually active had always been a fundamental part of that identity, and that was then changed. And I suppose making sense of that was quite hard... **my personal identity certainly went into a crisis***

*Mark, 45, prostate, gay*

I think gay men are a lot more sexually aware, or I think part of our identity is that it's about sex and our ability to function sexually, and ***I think we take a harder hit when it [ED] happens.*** *Rick, 59, prostate, gay*





# Loss of functioning – loss of community

I think the most significant thing, apart – apart from the physical side or the – the sexual dysfunction side is the psychological side, you know, being a gay man and that feeling of, ***as a gay man you sort of feel a little bit outside of the mainstream***, but ***as a gay man with prostate cancer, which along with erectile dysfunction***, you feel even removed from – well ***I feel, um, that I'm removed slightly from that group as well***

*Rick, age 59, diagnosed 1 year*



# Threats to gay identity

## *Meaning of ejaculate loss*

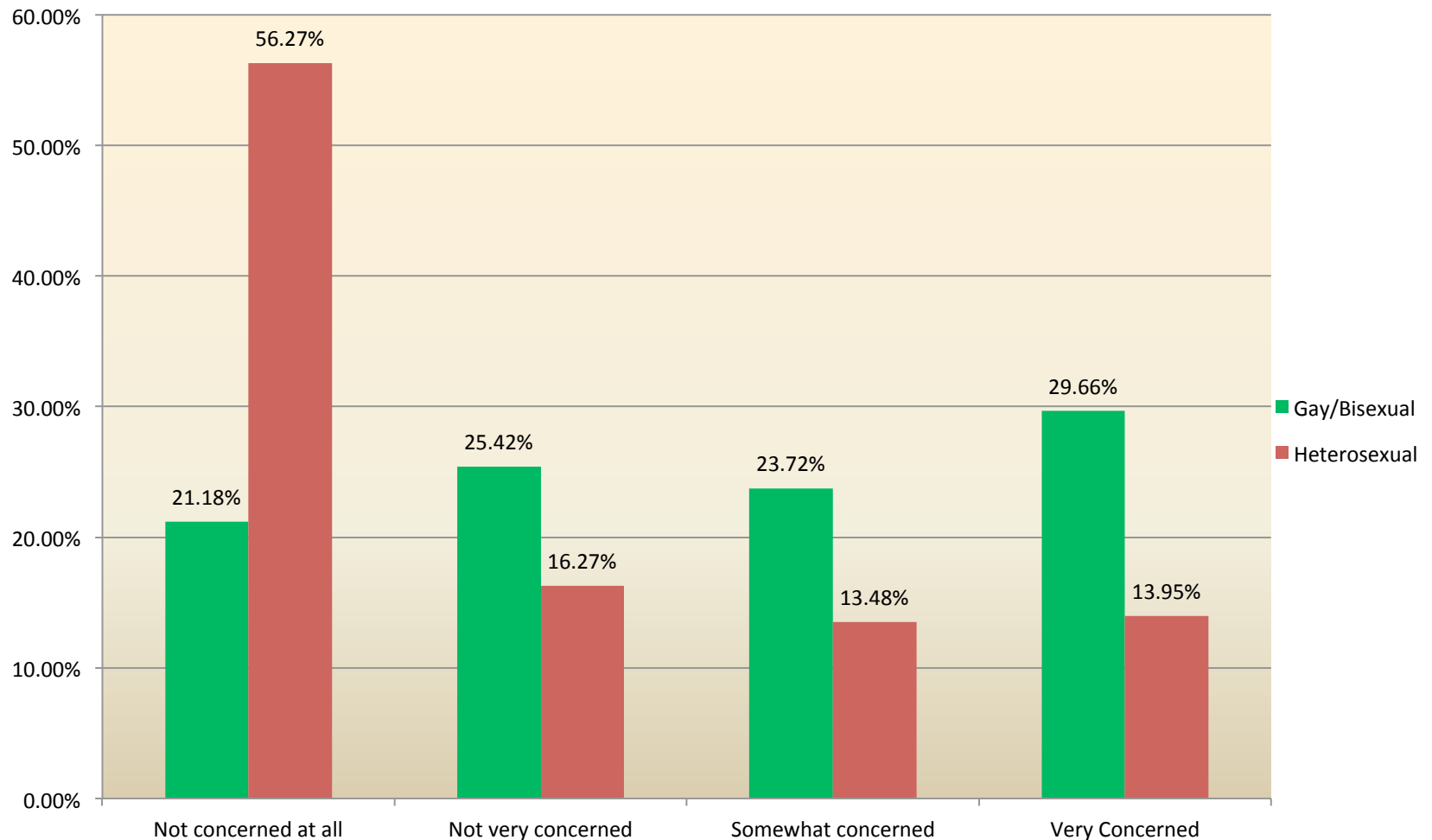
*It's one of the criteria gay men use to measure a partner's satisfaction, and, therefore, whether it's enjoyable to them. In straight sex, it happens differently, the ejaculation is not noticed, because that's generally inside the woman. With gay sex - the sex is not always internal. It can be external. Um, in the foreplay, the pre-cum, is a fairly important, measure of how your partner is reacting to you. Um, and certainly, **if the ejaculation is not there after orgasm, um, that's a judgement that the other partner didn't - didn't enjoy the sex** and, therefore, um, you know, it's very likely that - **that can create some difficulty in developing the relationship and having it go on***

*Mason, age 68, diagnosed 1 year*

# Ejaculate Loss – concern sig. higher in GB men

“How concerned are you with your current ability to ejaculate?”

Confirms Wassersug et al 2013 – 96 gay, 460 heterosexual men



# Threats to gay identity

## *Penis size*

For a gay male, you know, *we notice things like reduction in penis size.*

*Scott, 59, gay*

I would like to know the statistics of, um, *the suicides for guys, because, generally, the adjustment is absolutely – absolutely mind blowing.* Especially for guys, because *your dick shrinks and your diameter diminishes. It feels bloody terrible,*

*Drew, age 65, gay, diagnosed 5 years*

there's a – there's a naked thing, and walking around naked at the sauna doesn't really worry me but when you're walking around *and you've got this bloody now little dick, it's awful,* ah, my dick was sort of average I think, and now it's – I wouldn't think it's average, it's very – it's small, smaller

*Euan, age 66, diagnosed 3 years*



# PCa cutting short exploration of gay identity

I: What was it like for you exploring sexuality after being in a marriage for 32 years?

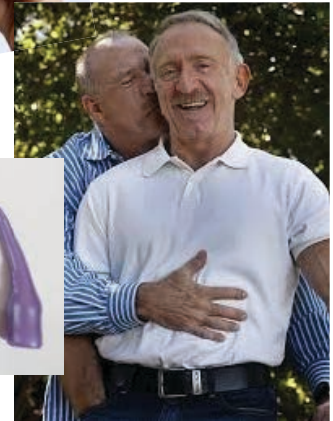
P: It was kind of... *I suppose, thrilling and scary because you didn't know what you were doing.* I didn't know what the basics were. There was no degree in gay male sex. So there was no literature available, if you like. The only thing you could do was look at the porn and say, "Is that what you do?" So *it was very difficult at an older age*, you know. *And then it just all crashed before I'd even sort of got there*, because by the time I'd got the diagnosis I'd had a count of about 8.5 so it was all pretty fast, it was devastating. It was just...*the whole thing had gone before it had even started*

*Clive, age 70, gay, diagnosed 16 years.*

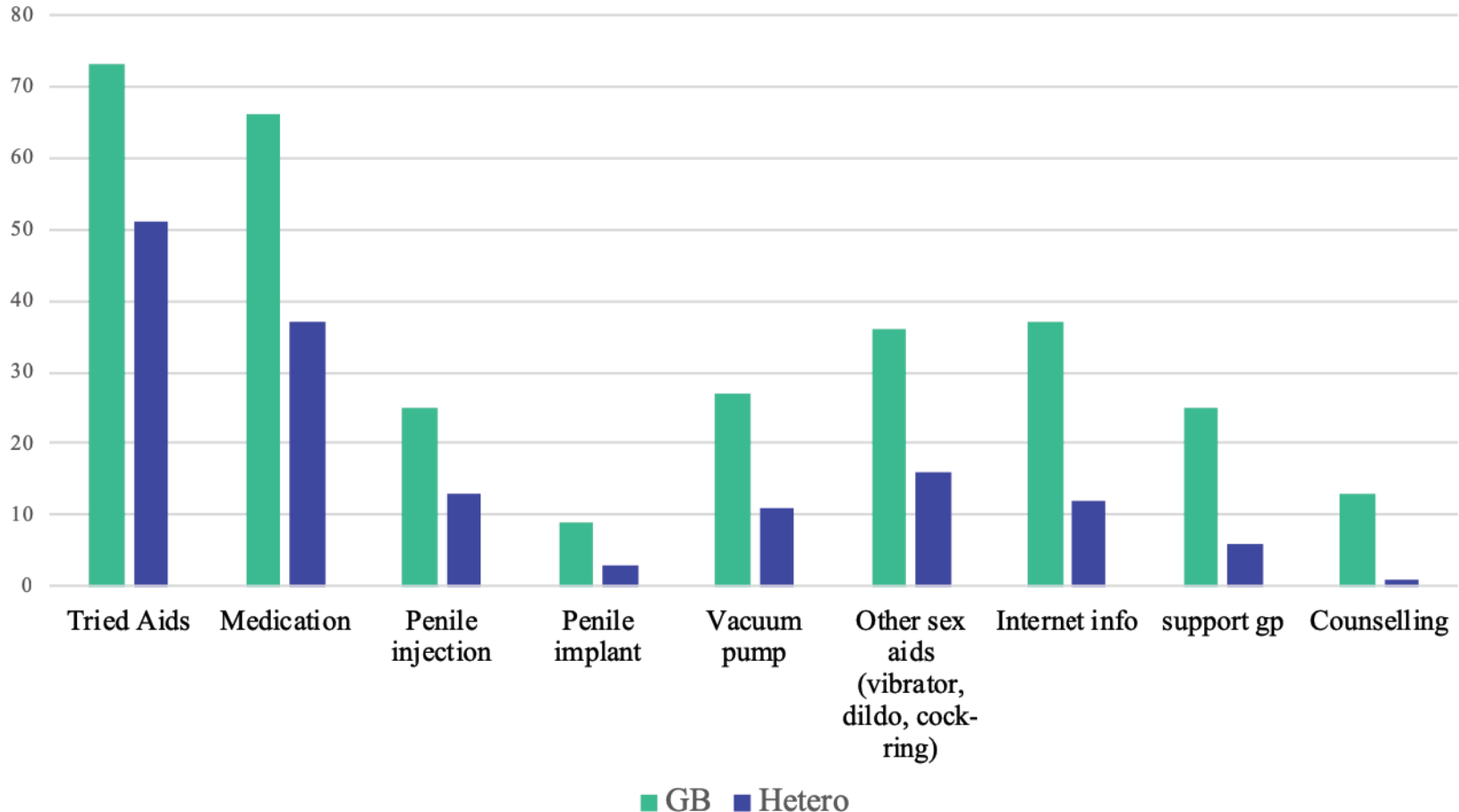


# Openness to sexual experimentation and renegotiation of sex

- Sexual re-negotiation
- Non-penetrative practices
- Embracing intimacy
- Sexual aids
- GB men: Reduced monogamy; opening up relationships; giving up multiple partners



## GB Men: Greater Use of Assistive Aids and Sexual Information



Ussher, J.M, Perz, J., Rose, D., Kellett, A., Dowsett, G. (2018) Sexual Rehabilitation after prostate cancer through assistive aids: A comparison of gay/bisexual and heterosexual men. *Journal of Sex Research* DOI: 0.1080/00224499.2018.1476444





**Disclosure and discussion with  
health care professionals (HCPs)**



# Gay identity disclosure

- Difficulties in disclosure – add to stress of cancer, dealing with sexual changes
- HCP responses – can create distress, or act as support
- HCP knowledge or openness to gay sex important



# HCP accepting - rejecting

My GP is very good. He's an unusual guy. He's very straight, very manly. ***It doesn't seem to worry him in the least.*** He said, "Well, as long as you don't park your Mardi Gras float out the front of me surgery," he said, "I don't mind what we discuss." ***He's very good,*** and no – no worries at all.

*Finn, 69, gay*

I said to him, can you explain to me, about the, um, penis being reduced in size and everything like that and, you know, I – it doesn't allow me to, um, have sex I think and he says, ***"I don't want to know anything about your sex life" because I was gay.***

*Gareth, 65, gay*

# Conclusion

- Both gay and heterosexual men experience sexual changes after Pca
- Differences in relationship context, level of distress, and meaning of sexual changes between GB and hetero men need to be acknowledged
- Importance of HPs being informed about gay men's sexuality - to provide appropriate information and advice

# Out with Cancer

## LGBTI experiences of cancer survivorship and care

Cls: Jane Ussher, Janette Perz, Martha Hickey, Suzanne Chambers, Gary Dowsett, Ian Davis, Kerry Robinson, Chloe Parton, Antoinette Anazodo

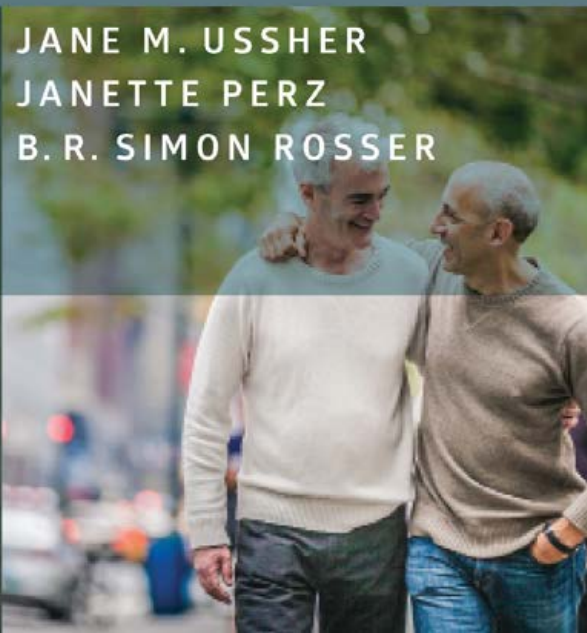
Australian Research Council Linkage Grant

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# GAY & BISEXUAL MEN LIVING WITH PROSTATE CANCER

from diagnosis to recovery



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JANETTE PERZ  
B. R. SIMON ROSSER